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News Release

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Photo: Ann Bennett

Laurel Resident Completes HEART Program at the Smithsonian Institution

Laurel, MD —Ann Bennett of Laurel, Maryland, the Executive Director of the Laurel Historical Society, completed the Heritage Emergency and Response Training (HEART) program held at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, on December 14, 2018.

“The HEART program was an amazing opportunity to connect with heritage and emergency management professionals from across the country. The program really opened my eyes to the need for partnering among non-profits in Laurel and nearby areas to prepare and assist each other in times of crisis, especially to preserve and protect our cultural heritage.” Ann Bennett stated after the completion of the week-long program.

Organized by the Heritage Emergency National Task Force, the training prepares cultural stewards, first responders, and emergency managers to work together to address emergencies and disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, or floods that affect cultural institutions and historic sites. The sessions offered realistic, hands-on training in risk and damage assessment, disaster planning, health and safety, emergency evacuation and salvage of museum objects, crisis communication, and team building.

Selected through a competitive nation-wide application process, the 25 participants came from a wide variety of museum specialties and library, archives, and emergency management fields. They represented 16 states and the Territory of Puerto Rico.

The Heritage Emergency National Task Force is a public- private partnership of 58 federal agencies and service organizations that protect our nation’s cultural heritage from the damaging effects of natural disasters and other emergencies. Co-chaired by the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative and FEMA’s Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation, the Task Force is committed to providing education and training to cultural stewards, first responders, and emergency managers to better prepare them to work together to address emergencies and disasters that affect cultural institutions and historic sites.

The Laurel Historical Society, located at 817 Main Street in Laurel, Maryland operates the Laurel Museum and has an extensive collection of artifacts, ephemera, and photos. Its John Calder Brennan Library is open to researchers by appointment Monday-Friday and includes newly digitized materials including the Laurel Leader, the Sadler Collection of photos and local school yearbooks. The Laurel Museum is closed until February 3, 2019 when it will reopen with its next exhibit: "Is There a Doctor in the House? Laurel's Healthcare Stories." Museum hours are Wed./Fri. 10 am-2:00p.m., Sundays 1-4pm. Admission is free. For more information: www.laurelhistoricalsociety.org, 301-725-7975, info@laurelhistoricalsociety.org. ##